As we have seen, the author develops a case for revolutionary democracy as the ultimate expression of what ordinary working people value most: solidarity and equality. He attacks the spurious “socialism” of the left – most notably, but not exclusively, the Leninist left – as counterrevolutionary in spite of its best intentions. Marx, he argues, gave the left a pernicious theory of revolution that defeated its own purpose, agreeing as it did with capitalism’s view of people.

The Marxist paradigm thus remained mired in capitalist assumptions. Ultimately, the working class was to Marx an empty abstraction, an active revolutionary subject taking command of its destiny, yet nonetheless a passive object needing to be led. Lenin could resolve the inconsistencies in Marx’s “science of revolution” with his vanguard of the proletariat, but no more than Marx could he manage to overcome capitalism using capitalist values. Lenin’s “professionalized” organization of revolutionaries, detached from the class it was to guide into emancipation, ultimately failed because its model of revolution was itself retrograde. The working majority wanted to make a world that was a real community, but their self-appointed leaders on the left neither understood nor desired this.

This issue will deal with the implications of Stratman’s critique for the analysis of the class struggle, and especially its assumptions about Marx’s methodology, the materialist conception of history.

The article on the rear cover proposes a counter-thesis to Stratman’s use of the paradigm concept, which unfortunately does nothing creative with it as a theoretical tool. Stopping with simply advancing a candidate for a new paradigm sidesteps the real issue: focusing the consciousness of the working majority on the need to redesign its idea of itself, to cast off its identity as an economic class and definitively terminate the class struggle by beginning a positive, classless reorganization of the basis of society.

In this context, the paradigm change itself we should see as the revolution abolishing class rule, as the mechanics of self-emancipation, and not simply as an intellectual model of the process.
The conman cometh

Stratman’s notions of a “capitalist model” and a “capitalist vision” play a very central role in his concept of revolutionary democracy: “Capitalism,” he tells us, “is first and foremost a system of social control. The vast resources of the capitalist class are directed primarily toward this purpose; profit and economic development are subordinate to this end” (p. 46).

Asked, why is there a capitalist class at all? he would not be able to answer. Why did any such thing as a capitalist class appear in the first place? Were a few evil geniuses out to create and extend a paradigm over the whole of humanity little by little, back in the very beginning? How is it that the system of social control that was feudalism failed? Or chattel slavery? Capitalism inherited the earth from both these modes of production—and that is what they were, modes of production—yet it seems to have become transformed into “first and foremost a system of social control.” Does he mean to say the predecessors of capitalism were also “first and foremost systems of social control”? It would be interesting to learn how chattel slavery, feudalism or capitalism ever managed to get past its early years, considering the gross inefficiency of each at implementing the social controls on which Stratman pins so much of his analysis.

On the one hand, we could write off this highly focused class consciousness of the capitalist class as a paranoid strain of subjectivism, familiar from Trotskyist propaganda—[Capitalists] strive in every area of life to break the bonds among people from which people draw their understanding of reality and their ability to change it. This socially-imposed isolation is intended to induce doubts in each individual about his or her own worth. (p. 46)

That would be a mistake, however, because the effect of capitalist rule is to corrode the self-confidence of ordinary people, and ruling-class ideas are slanted against the socially-defined individual; capital does divide and conquer through the powerful tool of isolation. The problem is rather that, having deprived the economic of causal status, Stratman finds himself forced to assign to capital (divided up among members of the capitalist elite) motives of a purely psycho-political character. Moreover, since “profit and economic development are subordinate to” social control, the ruling ideas of the capitalist class metamorphose from an indispensable implement of thought control into a strategic plan:

[They] encourage in each individual, mode to feel personally insecure in his isolation, the capitalist view of other people—that other people are mindless and selfish competitors, imbued with capitalist values and engaged in a lonely battle for “success.”... Their chief goal is to fulfill the capitalist vision of human society, in which the vast majority live lives of brutish passivity, and a capitalist elite produce the material and cultural wealth. Capitalists strive to create a world in which fulfillment comes not from human relationships but from things—from possession and consumption of the fruits of the capitalist economy.

We may say, then, that Stratman’s idea that the capitalist class works from a paradigm derives from his rejection of the view of people he imputes to Marx, which leads him to reject the materialist conception of history. This leaves him only a struggle to impose values and a divisive system of unequal power relations: which effectively makes it impossible to give a solid historical account of how the whole system of social control came about in the first place. The reality is, capitalism is a form of production that started out at very modest levels of manipulative capability and only acquired the faculties for imposing social controls by degrees.

Another question troubles the picture. Stratman argues, plausibly enough, that “the rulers have no intention of solving the key problems, because their continued existence as rulers depends on the problems continuing in some form” (p. 263). If, however, the capitalists never actually achieve historically the fullness of control they are always seeking economically—presumably because the revolutionary impulse of working people partially thwarted them from its total achievement—isn’t this saying both the capitalist and working classes share an interest in maintaining the class struggle? That workers, too, in other words, have a stake in being exploited? Capitalists do indeed have an interest in perpetuating class struggle (which they only decry when it threatens to trash their profits)—but the working class has none. It is a matter of record that capitalists don’t actively pursue social control unless it supports the general régime of production for profit. It only
makes sense to say so, however, if we assume the primary character of the economic factor.

A case in point is Stratman’s treatment of the Kronstadt revolt—which would have become, had it succeeded, a “third revolution” overthrowing the new dictatorship of the Secretariat set up by Lenin’s self-appointed Vanguard. Stratman specifically quotes Paul Avrich in *Kronstadt 1921* as referring to “the dictatorship of the Communist Party, with its Cheka and its state capitalism” (p. 148). If capitalism is “primarily” a system of social control and a revolution “overthrew” it, yet the “Communist” Party simply took over this system of social control and modernized it—somehow it seems that either no revolution actually occurred, or it failed to liquidate the capitalist basis of society—was in short a “rebellion” or “failed revolution” or a much more limited capitalist revolution.

“Managing” the people

What the Bolsheviks sought directly to control was not a working class still in its infancy, nor a peasantry that already in the post-feudal economy of Tsarism was approaching the brink of anachronism (as a controlled social class?), but the development of an economy that took both classes and converted them into a modern industrial working class. “Management” of each went with the turf; but it was the turf they wanted. It would be absurd to picture them as seeking merely to crush and oppress a social class they knew was still only in its beginnings; and that is the trouble with the notion of the primacy of social control—it cannot avoid representing the economic dimension of class struggle as static.

That said, anyone who can make the following statement has certainly got the basic idea:

The ruling class needs to prevent people from collectively discussing and solving their problems for the simple reason that, at bottom, elite control is the problem. In a revolutionary democratic society, all the talent and intelligence that people could bring to bear on the world’s problems would be used to solve them. (p. 265)

—Ron Elbert

As long as Stratman understands that no system of social control exists in a vacuum—that the economic reason capitalism exists, its need to control and its historical modality together form the basic components of the overall cycle of class rule—it does not ultimately matter that he sees capitalism as primarily a system of social control. What capitalists seek control for (profit) is at least as important as, if not more important than, its exercise; how control can be accomplished (by private individuals or by the state) strongly conditions which profit strategy gets the best results and the optimal manner in which the ruling class can exploit working people. Taking any one of the components as “primary” still requires dealing with the other two. His emphasis on social control nonetheless involves him quite needlessly in something not unlike reconstructing an original real-life person from a police artist sketch.

This creates his analysis of class-struggle issues to become rigid and opaque. Let us consider two of his instances: the Bolsheviks’ betrayal of the working class following the October Revolution and the “betrayal” of U.S. workers by union leaders after the Second World War.

*In using Marx this way, Lenin was only the early ancestor of today’s “Marxist economist,” who are very good at finding Marxish reasons why one development strategy or another will or won’t work—but who don’t seem very eager to use their analytic skills to show workers they can think their way out of a system that in general works only for employers.*

On page 147 he runs through a list of some very dirty laundry, cataloguing the duplicity and opportunism of the Bolsheviks—with Lenin and Trotsky actively, even frenetically, in the lead—concluding that “the Bolsheviks pursued relentlessly, in every sphere of life, policies which were entirely consistent with their view of workers and of social change.” They did their level best to squash, punish and destroy every semblance or vestige of working-class initiative in the service of Lenin’s “vision” of Marxified economic development.

We should ask, however, why the Bolsheviks wanted to seize power in the first place. On the strength of Lenin’s interpretation of Marx, they sought to introduce some radical reforms affecting who could accumulate capital and for what reasons; in keeping on many of the same individuals who had managed the system under the Tsarist régime, the Bolsheviks were only being consistent with this interpretation. A real working-class revolution, ephemeral as it would have been, was absolutely anathema to them; their rationale was well expressed by Martov (quoted by Maurice Brinton in “The Bolsheviks and Workers’ Control, 1917-1921”):

The First Trade Union Congress also witnessed a heated controversy on the question of the relation of the trade unions to the state. The Mensheviks claiming that the revolution could only usher in a bourgeois-democratic republic, insisted on the autonomy of the unions in relation to the new Russian state... Martov [speaking for the Bolsheviks] put a more sophisticated viewpoint: “In this historic situation,” he said, “this government cannot represent the working class alone. It cannot but be a de facto administration connected with a heterogeneous mass of toiling people,
with proletarian and non-proletarian elements alike. It cannot therefore conduct its economic policy along the lines of consistently and clearly expressed working-class interests." (Brinton, p. 33)

The Bolsheviks, in other words, did not take power in the name of the working class because they had not promised to do so: in their search for the support of a majority, they — at Lenin's very strong insistence — had tendered an offer of their support to Russia's peasant class. This in itself was a departure from the Marxian concept of abolishing the wage system. A party stepping into the role of provisional government could not even theoretically govern directly for the benefit of workers if every decision would have to be negotiated with the peasantry as well. But more importantly, the real impact of that "alliance" was the implication that governing for two classes meant continuing — in fact, strengthening — the institutions of class rule: a treadmill the Bolsheviks could not have gotten off even had they wanted to. But they were disingenuous enough to know beforehand they would face this dilemma.

On top of all that, seeking to govern a multi-national, multi-class system independently of all classes and nationalities meant, again on the strength of Lenin's interpretation of Marx, perpetuating an arrangement favoring some kind of capital accumulation for its own sake, since that was the only economic strategy open to the Bolsheviks that could secure their legitimacy as a ruling elite. If in *What is to be Done?* Lenin had laid out his non-Marxist concept of an organization of professional revolutionaries, in *The State and Revolution* he took a string of quotations from Karl Marx and twisted them around with specious arguments to get Marx's retroactive sanction for Lenin's project of building a capitalist state over the bones of the autocracy.

Pushing the economic dimension of Lenin's "vision" and his "view of the working class" into the background may allow Stratman to paint the Bolsheviks using bold colors and dramatic lines, but that is about all it accomplishes — rendering it a mystery why (or even how) the Russian intelligentsia could not only take it on themselves to decide the fate of Russian capitalism, but actually manage to pull it off in the face of the most chaotic circumstances. In Stratman's hands they become such wicked villains we have to pinch ourselves to remember that although they may have modified the way capital was accumulated in Russia, they also had no clear sense of how they should proceed. Lenin was not so much riding the tiger as herding the sheep.

On the rise of organized labor in the United States, Stratman writes: "The modern labor movement in the U.S. was founded in the thirties on the basis of struggles which challenged capitalism, sometimes implicitly, sometimes openly." (p. 191). Struggles, it goes without saying, can "challenge" capitalism in two ways: either they can defy business as usual without questioning any of the assumptions on which capitalism organizes the life of society; or they can aggressively contradict those assumptions and be either implicitly or explicitly hostile to business in all its forms. The ordinary purpose of organizing trade unions poses the first kind of challenge; because this range of activities relies on, rather than questions, the basis on which society is organized, counting all its gains and losses in terms of what the system can do for people, it tends to be economic rather than political in character.

Any form of organizing that is essentially economic in character cannot be revolutionary, no matter who the organizers are or what they think they are doing. Just as the economic is a subset of the social, so the political is a subset of the economic: schematically speaking, that is, we first choose how we will organize society, which carries with it a certain kind of economy; then we have to choose the politics that go with that economy. If workers organize solely to protect themselves from capitalists, none of their organizations can lend themselves to revolutionary projects, i.e., overthrow capitalism, replace it with something adequate to the satisfaction of human needs (or that affirms values of equality and solidarity).

To say, consequently, that the "modern labor movement... was founded... on the basis of struggles which challenged capitalism" raises a few questions. If worker organizations aim to achieve no more than to equilibrate the relationships between their members (or even workers at large) and the capitalist class, they neither challenge capitalism as a form of society nor rest on struggles that do. The aim of abolishing capital is a political one, and any struggle having that for its object goes well beyond the boundaries or limits on which trade unionism is premised — goes, in fact, in a wholly different direction. Getting hit often enough with a billy club in itself gives rise to no revolutionary attitude. A trade union that became a revolutionary organization would by the mere fact have ceased to be a trade union, even though it might untraditionally combine both economic and political forms of organizing.

**Strong feelings breed radical ideas**

In view of the decline of "the modern labor movement," we may well ask to what extent capitalism was actually challenged in the thirties. If workers were trying to give expression to basic human values in their actions against capitalism by lining up behind those among them who saw an opportunity for themselves in reaching a deal with capital (the "Reuther group"), how strong a desire to break free of an oppressive, anti-human system did this represent? From the perspective of socialist (democratic) revolution, strong

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*Frank Marquard, An Auto Worker’s Journal: The UAW from Crusade to One-Party Union (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975); p. 120.
feelings have a radical articulation; absence of a radical articulation signifies questionable (possibly no) motivation. Workers who put their organizing energy behind individuals or organizations having either a pro-system or an ambiguous attitude are at best not sure of what they want.

“What the working class did not know it knew” was that capital could not promise people even decent survival. Capital’s power to compel and degrade diminished only slightly in the political dimension, as workers voiced their disapproval but not their rejection. The spectre of revolution faded rather quickly as Nazi aggression provided capital with a Bismarkian trapdoor, enabling it to demonstrate its indispensability to society by winning a war against tyranny. Stratman needs to explain, at all events, how if the economic factor is so puny, a crisis of social control can require an economic depression to trigger it.

The author’s use of overstatement, on the other hand, casts the capitalists in giant perspective:

The great Flint sit-down strike in auto which first established the CIO was followed by a wave of sit-downs and other strikes across the country — more than 10,000 in 1937. The more far-seeing members of the corporate class correctly saw that their best response to trade unionism would be to sanction and legalize it. They could then strive to keep trade union struggles within the economic dimensions of capitalism. With their struggles regulated within an institutional framework, union members could be demobilized by union officials who have the legal obligation to uphold labor contracts negotiated with management. (p. 192)

This does no good at all for our grasp of the forces at work. I would challenge Stratman to back up his assertion that the capitalist class’s “more far-seeing members” devised a conscious and deliberate strategy aimed primarily at neutralizing an incipient anti-capitalist revolution. The challenge posed by the organizing drives of the 30s did not threaten the interests of capital (except with a drop in the rate of profit); the reason it let the New Deal get past it (in the U.S.) was only that it could not just then buy any electable politicians.

Frank Marquart, a one-time education director for the UAW who in his early years had sailed in and out of the Proletarian Party and later belonged to the Detroit Local of the World Socialist Party, presents things differently in his memoir, An Auto Worker’s Journal: The UAW from Crusade to One-Party Union. “In 1939 General Motors was forced to come to terms with the UAW when Walter Reuther, then director of the UAW’s GM department, called the skilled trades workers out on strike. So GM and Chrysler were learning the hard way that the union was something they would have to live with” (Marquart, p. 94). “Following Reuther’s complete victory in 1947,” he reports elsewhere, “the UAW’s democratic kind of factionalism was rapidly transformed into a one-party state, and the Reuther administration worked hand-in-hand with management to discipline workers” (p. 140). The postwar capitalist comeback, in short, responded to weak or even false consciousness among the workers and not to any special heightened awareness within the capitalist class.

False sense of insecurity

The New Deal was by no means generally accepted as the price businessmen would have to pay for curbing the urge to revolution. It was largely the work of a reformist-minded working class who seized on the spectre of revolution as an excuse to push through a series of measures designed to paper over the organizing gap between workers in America and workers in Europe. For a time it worked. Granted they could not have done it without the active and interested support of well-to-do renegades like Roosevelt, they furnish a perfect example of how some members of the working class can delude themselves that capital will somehow someday work for them. The highly dramatic scenario Stratman presents hovers uncertainly between a potentially revolutionaries situation and a counterrevolutionary master strokeaying off an incipient revolution.

What explains the dénouement much better is the rescue of capital from the jaws of working-class protest by the subsequent return of prosperity; the wartime investment bonanza, followed by U.S. domination of postwar capitalism for most of the period of recovery. The manifest inability of Keynesian fiscal magic to “transfer” sufficient wealth back to the working class to end the Depression (owing to the government’s need to pay the bills that deficit spending policies incurred) is widely recognized. This does not prevent Stratman from seeing in the New Deal chicanery the outlines of a strategy. What the infuriated businessmen of the thirties did was resign themselves to waiting for an opportune moment to rescind Roosevelt’s reforms; and they made many efforts in that direction long before the seventies. They staged a generally successful comeback in the 50s, with gag-laws like the Taft-Hartley Act and other “no-strike” initiatives. They moved into high gear in the 70s to disorganize labor, which had already definitively lost the initiative long before, during the war years.

— Ron Elbert

Credits

Drawings front cover and pages 2, 5 and 15 by I. Roger Stevens; “King Capital” (p. 11) is reproduced, with token modifications, from a Socialist Party of Canada flyer of the 60s.

5/spring 1999
S o wide of the mark is the author’s case against Marxism that a separate article (“Outside the Box?”) was necessary just to identify the points on which he claims his “new paradigm” supersedes that of Marx. Here I will deal only with his specific criticisms. Stratman builds his whole case, first of all, over the assumption that Karl Marx established a paradigm, the “science of revolution.”

Marx’s belief that he had discovered a “science” of revolution rests on his notion that the relations of production and the economic forces which they constitute operate independently of man’s will. He does not mean by this that individual thought or initiative is not possible or not a real factor in society, but that individual acts often have results contrary to their intent, and that the economic forces constituted by the sum of individual actions act according to their own laws (p. 165).

“The power of Marxism to inspire and to mislead,” he states on page 168, “derive from the same source: its credibility as a science of history and revolution.” Attributing to Marx the creation of a “science of revolution” (though he never documents the origin of this phrase, making it sound as though Marx proudly congratulated himself on giving birth to such a thing), Stratman proffers a “new paradigm” that will really put revolution on a scientific footing.

Who, however, actually coined the phrase, “science of revolution”? Can revolution itself be a science? What would this make of Stratman’s reliance on Thomas S. Kuhn’s concept of scientific revolutions, which are revolutions within science? [See “So you wanna be a paradigm?”] For now we might only ask whether a science can “mislead” either practitioners or society at large. If capitalism is bad for people, can there be a science of what is bad for people? To qualify Marx’s historical materialism as a “paradigm,” we would have to be able to say, not simply that Marx drew together a vast body of competing models for the analysis of society (and he manifestly did not), but that his revolution in social science was referenced on the work of the peer group of society as a whole. In the sense of marshaling the widely varying opinion of a “community” of scientists, Marx did not succeed at bringing off any revolution.

Did Marx establish a paradigm?

But Stratman manifests a tendency to confuse the political revolution of society at large with the kind that occurs among specialists; half the time he is excoriating Marx for his unscientific anti-social views of people, and the other half is paying him the grudging compliment of having “scientized” revolution. Stratman is also, however, confused on Lenin’s “theoretical achievement.” (See “Dr. Marx and Mr. Lenin,” WSR 14) Marx not having established a paradigm whose conditions have since become possible (a revolution will have to occur first), Lenin could not have added anything to one. The new (first) paradigm that still awaits us in the future will be the work of the revolutionaries, not of their predecessors.

Assuming for the sake of argument that Marx did establish a paradigm, why does it need replacing? It turns out this really breaks down into two problems: one that Stratman ignores, and a second that ignoring the first causes him to misread. Marx, says Stratman,

accepted the capitalist view of human motivation: “individuals seek only their particular interest,” he declared (Marx’s emphasis). For Marx, self-interest is fundamental to historical materialism as a science. Only self-interest is scientifically valid as a motivation; the rest is “ideology” (p. 165).

In The German Ideology Marx takes up a wide-ranging discussion of capitalist society in his time and how it is, as a class-divided society, had evolved into its then-existing form. On page 54 of that book he considers the concepts of class and individual interest, discussing not the individual but the division of labor that accompanied the breakup of community-based (and therefore community-owned and controlled) wealth production on the introduction of private, individually-owned and controlled wealth production. He elaborates on how the “communal” interests of social individuals, denied institutional expression under the new, radically opposed, régime of private property, became distorted into “particular” interests defined according to economic class. He nowhere states or implies that this “particularization” was a natural phenomenon or even assumes it as a logical point of departure.

In fact, his “view of human nature” takes roughly the same perspective as Stratman’s, in that the social individual is taken as primary, the cooperative urge is assumed as basic, and the spontaneous acceptance of all individuals as members of the community (Stratman’s condensed “equality”) is considered as given. Also like Stratman, Marx views these qualities of real individuals, not “passive” masses guided only by “particular” interests) as repressed and ignored, implying — and perhaps

*All citations are to the International Publishers editions.
Stratman missed an explicit formulation — that the spontaneous human urge to social relations characterized by solidarity and equality was only kept in check by a ruling-class policy of social control. Unlike Stratman, Marx confronts the economic dimension of this straightforwardly and is consequently not embarrassed by its incessant tendency to reappear as part of the problem.

Thus, “self-interest [egotism] is fundamental” only to Stratman’s (very one-sided) critique of historical materialism. Marx uses it only to characterize the distortion of human social relations that comes over society historically at some point in its development. His own concept of “interest” is that of the “communists” for whom he and Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto.

**Illusion vs. solidarity**

What is fundamental to historical materialism is community solidarity, that original state of human society styled “primitive communism.” Stratman makes no acknowledgment of the concept. Marx, on the other hand, considered it basic; Engels, especially, explored it in some depth in *Origin of the Family, State and Private Property*. It is not likely he or Marx would then simply put it aside when examining capitalist production and its predecessors. People calling themselves communists long before the Kremlin crew ever existed were profoundly and fundamentally in sync with the notion that “most people are engaged in a struggle to humanize the world.”

In the *German Ideology* Marx displays a keen sense of the interaction between ideas as items of knowledge and ideas as false beliefs. When he talks of individuals seeking “only their particular interest,” he is distinguishing this mistaken sense of purpose from the one they would seek if they were to set aside the false assumptions they are driven to adopt by the class disorganization of human society, sanctioned and implemented by themselves and their forebears.

The problem he is trying to solve here is, how do real individuals finally disembrace themselves of all the fake values loaded into their minds by so many generations of a history based on illusion? The “pursuit of particular interest,” then, is a recognition of that pursuit’s falsity, its antithetical character to the real interest of all human beings — their mutual community with one another. Nowhere in *We CAN Change the World* does its author show any appreciation of the problem of illusion in studying the history of ideas. His Marx lacks all sense of what the original Marx termed “fetishism.”

People can demonstrate a very strong tendency to reproduce, in the highest degree, conditioning designed to neutralize their efforts at conceptualizing human social relations on a human basis. They will cite chapter and verse of the standard capitalist fairy tales, resisting all attempts at reason. Marx, in talking about this counter-revolutionary (or reactionary) tendency in people’s attitudes, focuses on the question of just how adequate human knowledge is to the real world it forms a material element of. Hegel’s statement to the effect that “appearances deceive” postulated a discrepancy between what exists and what people think exists. This concern follows Marx all the way into *Capital*.

Taking cognizance of the possibility that people may, for good reasons or bad, not understand anything about what they deal with, that varieties of misconception — “false consciousness” or ideology in its more systematic forms — may cloud people’s ability to grasp the nature of the repression they face, is an unavoidable necessity for anyone interested in the revolutionary transformation of society. (If Stratman imagines this is not, or has ceased to be, a problem, he will find things to be otherwise.)

In speaking of “illusions” and “alien forces” existing outside [individuals], the origin and goal of which they are ignorant” (*German Ideology*, p. 54), Marx is thus placing the emphasis on the attitude of ignorance, not (as Stratman has it) on the social relations by which individuals cooperate to carry out private property’s division of labor. In making this switch of construction, Stratman has made it seem that Marx renders the individual hopelessly entrapped in a matrix of short-range, egoistic calculations that exclude relations of equality and solidarity. Marx, coming from a much broader and deeper philosophical background, considered that effective revolutionary action required a consciousness that stayed in touch with the reality of the human condition. Under the various forms of class ownership of the means of wealth production that have come and gone, the official versions of this sense of reality — including the ability to understand it from a human perspective — has become more and more attenuated and degraded, less and less “real” in human terms.

**“Self-interest” and ruling ideas**

While considerations of solidarity and equality are never out of reach, Marx assumed it would take a real, global, all-pervasive emergency to awaken this ever-present urge to be human from the semblance of slumber, something like hypnotic sleep, inflicted on it by the acceptance of ruling ideas. And he further assumed this emergency would take an immediately economic form, since this is the basic level at which all members of society must live their lives. This, in turn, was the whole reason he took up the study of political economy. He did not set out to be a better economist than Smith or Ricardo, but to defeat them using their own logic by bringing out its internal
contradictions. (It does not help that Stratman isolates selected passages from The Holy Family where it suits his brief but assiduously avoids mentioning the “humanistic” passages from Marx’s other writings, which would seem to embarrass him.)

The egoistic focus of class-divided society keeps generalizing the scope of repression, on the one hand, as it calls on ever more radical concepts to overturn the hegemony of each incumbent ruling class, on the other hand. The pursuit of “self-interest” thus defined, as a thorough reading of the German Ideology will disclose, forces the crime of private property back onto increasingly systematic and universal justifications. Capitalism is but the last, and the most inclusive, of these conceptual robbers’ dens.

Beyond that frontier Marx (and Engels) held that the initial impulse of the working class to rule society (in the manner of its “better”), under the impetus of casting about for means of dealing with the threat of annihilation of the last shreds of human decency, would eventually pressure people to question their assumptions— the “ruling ideas” planted in their heads — and realize that they must instead lay the foundations for a social order based on what Stratman calls human values of solidarity and equality. (Stratman must explain how he differs with this if he finds himself compelled to acknowledge that people initially fail to realize which direction they need to take their struggle to humanize the world.)

Self-interest as a problem

Though he is otherwise clear enough on the object to attain, he does not understand Marx. The “self-interest” with which he sees Marx as “unscientifically” hobbling the working class Marx never intended to be applied to it, since abolishing the rule of egoistic self-interest was precisely the problem it had to solve. The misconstruction placed on “self-interest,” however, leads Stratman to the entirely false conclusion that Marx saw slaves, serfs and wage-earners as a congeries of isolated individuals — the same as the capitalist does. Collapsing them all together into the persona of the wage-earner, on the other hand, Stratman draws the further inference that the exploitation of isolated individuals implies their victimization, their passivity, and this he writes down as Marx’s error. This accounts for the glaring discrepancy between his statements about the “Marxist paradigm” and the citations sprinkled throughout The German Ideology unmistakably affirming the social character of the individual.

Thus, he honestly believes that for Marx, real people were nothing, and the revolution was everything: “Historical materialism,” he thinks, “can be described as Marx’s attempt to show that history is moving inevitably in the direction of fulfilling mankind’s nature — a nature of which class society, in particular capitalist society, has deprived it. The subject of this history is humanity’s ‘species being’” (page 164). On this question Stratman missteps, however.

The phrase “species being” refers only to the quality of basic humanity possessed by all social individuals — what people have often referred to traditionally as “human nature.” Capitalism denies human social nature, because it operates on the sub-social plane of economic relations, but no Marxist — not even Marx himself — would attempt to argue that it “deprives humankind of its nature.” Capital does not have a “vision” or “world view,” as Stratman imagines: it only aims at reshaping the image of human nature in strictly sub-human (economic) terms since it is in the nature of economic relations to divide and analyze, this is how it defines and controls the human beings whose lives contribute to its power over them. This aim turns economic relations into a weapon against natural social relations within human communities.

As Marx saw it, people make capital happen; it is ultimately the working class’s own self-defeating support of capitalism and its institutions that keeps them enslaved as employees (or worse). A quality so abstract and general as human nature (“species being”) could likewise never serve as the subject of any history — let alone the one Stratman believes Marx envisioned: it would not qualify even as a primary factor for historical materialist methodology.

What is the working class?

To speak of Marx defining the working class “by what is done to it” (by capitalism, p. 164) rather than “by what it does” (for itself) is little more than a rhetorical flourish. Stratman may mean that people have an urge to solidarity and equality that they find little or no support for under capitalism: but that is just what Marx thinks, too.

The problem is that one cannot define something called a “working class” apart from capitalism, nor can one distinguish a capitalist elite from a working-class majority without alluding to the anti-social policy of capital, its need to control that majority, or the general sub-human (economic) focus of capitalist thinking. The working class is composed of those human beings who get pushed into a subhuman (economically defined) status within human society by other human beings who make use of power and privilege to compel the majority to spend their lives making the minority wealthier and still more powerful.
human beings in a cooperative framework; Stratman’s formula for this is “believing in equality and in commitment to each other.” And of course it is revolutionary.

It is therefore specious to argue that Marx is agreeing with the premise of capital in accepting as a fait accompli the point of departure that capital has already configured: the exploited status of the majority of humans. It is equally specious to argue that Stratman, in isolating the two characteristics of the human condition that he thinks define the values and attitudes of “ordinary working people,” has hit upon a definition of the working class in terms of “what it does,” when both he and Marx agree that it is above all a case of human beings denied the opportunity to exercise their human nature: both ends imply each other. As we have already seen, Stratman’s emphasis on the dimension of social control as primary leads him necessarily into such verbal morasses, involving as it does a corresponding strong de-emphasis on the economic dimension. It would certainly be hard to explain capitalism—or any other system of social control—without understanding its economic dimension; and Stratman only makes it harder on himself in minimizing that dimension.

**Vision and class struggle**

Even so, no one can fault Stratman for an upbeat rendering of the balance of the class struggle. Words like “vision” and “sharing” have, however, acquired a certain currency emanating out of upscale professional-managerial circles, and such words occupy a prominent place in his vocabulary. A vision is different from a program or a point of view. As this use of it makes clear, it can indicate something on the order of “sense,” though remaining vague and imprecise in its implications; an earlier incarnation was the phrase, “crude (or rough or primitive) sense of justice.” The word “vision” allows Stratman to abandon the constraints of objective analysis—which, while it may mark a symptomatic dropping off of public confidence in the authority of economists (and, more generally, in experts across the board), is hardly an improvement over the alleged Marxist paradigm.

The “articulation” he mentions is obviously left to the future, and he is only trying to elucidate a starting point along lines he thinks bear the stamp of the future. In this he is making a real leap of faith, since no institutional basis yet exists for such a theory. More than anything, he has written a book expressing a profound disillusionment with all previous organizing efforts. He has torn up any theoretical connections he might have relied on for the sake of an intuitive reformulation of the notion of class struggle—a reformulation he cannot validate historically.

He has thus created the very artificial risk of getting bogged down over the long run in the already-been-tried dilemma that wasted the efforts of so many Social Democrats: what one socialist has described as “the slippery slopes of reformism.”

However, in imagining he has refused Marx—and acting out of a pervasive, though very understandable, ignorance of the contributions made by world socialism to the theory of revolution—he has not produced the theoretical breakthrough he believes he has; and at the same time, he has forsaken those very points of reference capable of making his discourse universally accessible to social science—specifically, the insights of historical materialism. He has thus created the very artificial risk of getting bogged down over the long run in the already-been-tried dilemma that wasted the efforts of so many Social Democrats: what one socialist has described as “the slippery slopes of reformism.”

**A paradigm for capital**

“Marx’s model of history,” Stratman argues, constitutes a paradigm, “an explanatory model through which scientists interpret their data and make sense of the world which they observe,” and it has met with conditions it cannot explain; although he also wants us to think it was never a legitimate scientific model in the first place, failing as it did to meet the standards of an “adequate” revolutionary theory. However, presented as a counter-paradigm that “sees with new eyes” conditions missed by “the Marxist model” and that “works in a new world” (in Kuhn’s phrase), revolutionary democracy turns out to be a mere string of philosophical generalities—in themselves empty of content. For all the grand talk of paradigms, Stratman’s alternative model promises all—but the spade work is not performed.

He nowhere explains his references to a “capitalist theory of history and social development”—none, at any rate, that systematically state a theory of society or social development proving capitalism is bound to triumph (as he believes Marx is supposed to have done for socialism). Possibly he is thinking of Ayn Rand and her Objectivism. In claiming, furthermore, that “capitalist and Marxist theories of history and social development...have remained within the same paradigm of history,” Stratman is suggesting that capitalism itself works on a paradigm.

**The profit orbit**

Unless he is making political economy the “science” of capitalism and having it adopt a view of human nature that provides a “paradigm of history driven by economic development,” capitalism as a system (even of social control) is not a science. (Nor is revolution.) Individual capitalists have their views and their philosophies; but these only approach something typical to the extent that they confine themselves to the orbit determined by profit. Capitalism’s mode of production might be called the “profit” paradigm, except that abolishing wages and capital is necessary to establish a first paradigm.

Political economy (along with economics), as I explain elsewhere, is not a separate science, and its legitimacy as a branch of social science is in any case dubious (see “So you wanna be a paradigm?”). If Stratman is referring to political economy, then in equating what he perceives to be “Marx’s theory of history” with a capital-
ist one, he is implying that Marx was never more than a flamboyant and pretentious economist. On this reading, we should not consider him a “revolutionist” at all.

Yet that is the basis on which he claims Marx’s “model” has failed. But as we have seen, this equation is riddled with faulty assumptions: those relating to Marx’s “vision” of social change and (not less importantly) the rather dogmatic insistence that Lenin and the Bolsheviks, piloting their “Marxist” ship of state, shared that vision and attempted to implement Marx’s ideas on communism. No one has ever uncovered any evidence to that effect, nor can Stratman come up with any that is not some form of apologetic in behalf of the Soviet Union. And in any case, it is not Marxists who are the scientists agreeing on an explanatory model — it is every human being alive. Marx only sought to provide people with a methodology which he was confident met the criteria for scientific research.

On page 163, Stratman writes:

Scarcity — the need for economic development — led to the creation of classes in human society; class society — inequality — is the basis of economic development; the creation of a classless society is dependent on the overcoming of scarcity — that is, on the development of the productive forces of society to a point where scarcity is replaced by abundance.

This is inaccurate on two counts. First of all, Marx did not make economic development “the driving force of history”; capitalism did. The term “development” means increase of commodity wealth as a result of capitalist investment; pre-capitalist economies characterized by production for exchange can only be said to have “developed” if we in the 20th century decide to call the long-term changes they underwent “development.” All Marx argues is that wealth production in some form is the central characteristic every human society has in common, that wealth in class societies takes the form of commodities and that the capitalist form of wealth production in particular takes the form of economic development.

In the second place, Marx never held that scarcity was the natural condition of human society; he may have used the word “primitive” to describe the human community before it fell into the ways of private property and production of goods and services for sale on the market at a profit (as he did in the phrase, “primitive communism,” which indicated an assumption of spontaneous abundance as the original starting point for the human species — another name for human society). Marx likewise posits no inherent “need” for economic development: he recognizes that it can occur — and will occur if conditions favor it. Once we assume its occurrence as given, certain necessities spring from that assumption. Only capitalists need to develop their markets. He is equally silent on the original ancient motives or reasons people could have had for introducing commodity exchange, as he is on the question of how common ownership would work; what examples of the latter he gives are pointedly speculative, serving only to illustrate.

**Original state of equality**

However, if we are to assume an original state of equality — and Stratman implies Marx did — then are we not (including Marx) to conclude that people are all by nature equal individuals with their own talents and abilities, at least as far as access to opportunities for satisfaction is concerned? Marx based the concept of exploitation on working ability (labor-power). He did not borrow it from Adam Smith and David Ricardo. How does Stratman explain Marx’s development of a theory assuming human equality and solidarity and his simultaneous adoption of theories assuming exactly the opposite? What sense would it have made for any economist to assume the inevitable destruction of the system of production whose development he advocates?

Similarly, Stratman has a tendency to homogenize consciousness, ascribing to the capitalist class as he does a “method” and a “model” or “paradigm.” Capitalists, in Stratman’s universe, have a plan; they know what they want, how to get it and what they are doing. He mistakes capital’s need to repress with a proactive policy of control. Repression, on the other hand, implies precisely a lack of control. His control thesis requires the capitalist class to perceive itself beating down a subservient social class it has itself created. At the same time, the workers’ obnoxious (revolutionary) humanity pushes capital to countermeasures responding to a fear for the profitability of investments.

**Whose contradiction is it?**

We must ask how capital could both view human beings as a passive mass, as part of the problem, not the solution, and yet still recognize the revolutionary threat implied in workers’ halting efforts to reprise their thwarted humanity — to reorder their lives on a basis of equality and solidarity? For if capital’s perception of human beings is abstract from their real lives as to see them nothing but the butt-end of a bottom line, capitalists cannot believe revolution is even possible. They cannot respond to a threat to do the impossible: they can only respond to the threat of taking their specific stocks of capital and redistributing them to other would-be capitalists (exactly what the Bolsheviks did).

The horn of the dilemma is therefore either that the capitalist class sets about actively crushing the threat of human revolution, thus negatively validating the notions of solidarity and equality, and rendering Stratman’s pronouncements on capital’s view of human beings inapplicable; or its view of the human beings it controls is fatally conservative, and capitalists cannot even conceive of the possibility of a revolution in the basis of society. Either it achieves its goal of total control, dooming the terrifying concept of democratic revolution to oblivion, or it falls victim finally to its own corrupt interpretation of human nature — dooming to the cutting-room floor Stratman’s hypothesis of social control as the governing, primary factor.

I would submit, in defense of the combined economic and political thesis world socialists work from, that the latter is indeed the case, that the long-term response of business to worker inroads on profit margins made in the sixties (pp. 122-136) sprang from a desire to protect their market position.
DEMOCRACY 'R' US

Capitalism was not designed to be fixed.
Do you ever wonder why millions are spent during a campaign to get someone into office? Obviously there is a great deal at stake.
Candidates are identified by their ideology. If a Socialist candidate entered the race, his only monetary support would supplied by the Socialist Party, and they would have to rely on donations from the members, and they are unlikely to have any rich “Perots” to help them. Since we are the only party that represents the worker, it follows that the government is owned by those who can spend millions on campaigns. They pass all the laws in their favor. Nevertheless, even with all their power, they cannot make capitalism do their bidding. It is like trying to steer a boat without a rudder. Even with all the most able professors of economics, all the captains of industry, at their disposal, no one can fix something that cannot be fixed.

We must replace capitalism with socialism.
"Once a socialist, always a socialist" is a saying familiar among socialists. When you have become convinced that reforming capitalism doesn’t work (for the haves-nots), there is no other alternative.

THE REASONING DEPARTMENT

Many years ago folks thought that the earth was flat, and those who ventured too far afield would surely fall off the edge. It was also thought that the sun circled the earth.

All through history folks have been making keen observations, only to discover that they cannot always believe their senses.

We see only what is wearable. We hear only what is hearable. We can’t see through steel or hear the flea cough, and since our brains are fed information via our senses, it, too, is limited in its ability to reason correctly. We must distinguish between theory and fact and between fact and fiction — and though we humans are the only reasoning beings on this old planet, our priorities in the Reasoning Department are easily sidetracked, it seems. We make an awful mistake when we allow “leaders” to do our thinking for us. Don’t you know that’s a good way to get fleeced?

This is where I make my sales pitch: socialists do not have (or recommend) leaders. A socialist candidate would flat-out tell you that he doesn’t want your vote unless you want socialism. Reforming capitalism is not on our agenda. Our political opponents have been doing that for over 200 years. Can you picture a system without money? No buying or selling, no bribing, no graft, no drug dealers, no robberies, no muggings, no advertising ... Just free access to all we produce.

"From each according to his or her abilities, to each according to his or her needs."

All we need for that arrangement is a majority of folks who want socialism. Can you imagine a world without money or the need for it? A world without advertisements, no stocks or bonds, no Wall Streets, no banks or brokerages, no governments, no subject class, no prisons or prisoners, no one person with authority over another (except perhaps a mother over her child), no poverty and no wars ... Did you realize that a true democracy is impossible where leaders and governments exist? The very word “govern” presupposes a subject class needing to be governed.

If we could persuade the 60 percent of the U.S.’s eligible voters who don’t now bother to vote (and their fellow workers everywhere else) to look into something really worthwhile — eliminating the wages-and-salary system in favor of free access and free working associations of women and men — that would be all we’d need to take back the world from the thieves who employ us.

Think about it. It’s your choice.

—W.H.
expressing the practical aspects of living in community. Marx demonstrates a vivid sense of this tendency toward solidarity (economically expressed as cooperation) and incorporates this sense into his methodology:

It is above all necessary to avoid postulating “society” once again as an abstraction confronting the individual. The individual is the social being (“Private Property and Communism,” Early Writings).

And:

Social activity and social mind by no means exist only in the form of activity or mind which is directly communal. Nevertheless, communal activity and mind, i.e., activity and mind which express themselves directly in a real association with other men, occur everywhere where this direct expression of solidarity arises from the content of the activity or corresponds to the nature of mind (“Private Property and Communism”).

As if that were not enough, he states, point-blank, in the “Critique of Hegel’s Dialectic”: “Man equals self-consciousness.” Now, this is not exactly the language of someone who sees (working) people primarily as “dehumanized and passive victims of economic forces.” Marx only approached the study of political economy through his interest in human activities as exemplified in labor. What he analyzed from that vantage point was capitalism’s effect on human labor.

In a famous little screed written in 1871, his critique of the Gotha Program, Marx testify challenges and refutes an entire series of demands making up the German Social Democrats’ political manifesto (or program). In that critique he rebukes his comrades for descending into the very kind of economized-dominated thinking for which Stratman criticizes him. One example:

...wages are not what they appear to be, namely, the value, or price, of labor power ... the wage worker has permission to work for his own subsistence, that is, to live, only in so far as the works for a certain time grants for the capitalist (and hence also for the latter’s consumers of surplus value); . . . the whole capitalist system of production turns on the increase of this gratis labor by extending the working day or by developing the productivity, that is, increasing the intensity of labor power, etc.; that, consequently, the system of wage labor is a system of slavery, and instead of a slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social productive forces of labor develop, whether the worker receives better or worse payment.

Marx is pointing out, in other words, that while workers might succeed in getting more pay for the same work (or better working conditions or benefits), this will not change their condition of slaves. This implies, logically, that slavery is not the normal condition of the mentally active human being (as he argued in the previously quoted passages) and that the emancipation of the working class has nothing to do with agitating for economic improvements.

Stratman is also apparently unfamiliar with the famous quote from the Preface to The Critique of Political Economy, according to which “the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.” [Emphasis added.] Given the statements made by Marx in his early writings (quoted above), what else can he mean by this but that “the social, political and intellectual life process” transcends the merely economic aspects of life in
general? The Preface from which this particular passage is taken, and which is usually quoted under the shadow of Marx the economist (and therefore out of context), is ordinarily the one taken by people who consider themselves opponents of "Marxist ideology" as proving Marx’s "determinism"—a tendentious rehash on which Stratman’s whole rebuttal stands or falls.

So “Marx's model of history did not see working people as conscious agents of change who act on the basis of their own anti-capitalist values”? Marx did not see the humanity for the economics? That certainly doesn't come out in the following statements.

The proper class and the proletariat class express the same human alienation. But the former feels comfortable and confirmed in it, recognizes itself as alienation as its own power and thus has the semblance of a human existence. The latter feels itself crushed by this alienation, sees in it its own impotence and the reality of an inhuman existence. It is, to use an expression of Hegel's, "in the midst of degradation, the revolt against degradation," a revolt with which it is forced by the contradiction between its humanity and its situation, which is an open, clear and absolute negation of its humanity (The German Ideology, p. 20, quotation taken by the editor from The Holy Family).

These are the very same points Stratman makes, thinking he has discovered Marx agreeing with capitalist assumptions. Moreover, says Marx, the "all-round development of the individual will only cease to be conceived as ideal, as vocation, etc., when the impact of the world which stimulates the real development of the abilities of the individual comes under the control of the individual's themselves, as the communists desire (Editor's Introduction, quoting an abridged part; my emphasis)." Are these the same "communists" who took power away from the workers in 1918, under Lenin's guidance, so no annoying peasantry could eject them from the government?

Does Marx define "working people primarily as dehumanized and passive victims of economic forces who, when they are moved to action, or moved by these same forces" in this passage?

Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all (p. 51).

Then again, if the circumstances in which the individual lives allow him only one-sided development of a single quality at the expense of all the rest, if they give him the material and time to develop only one quality, then this individual achieves only one-sided, crippled development. No moral preaching avails here. And the manner in which this one-preferentially favored quality develops depends again, on the one hand, on the material available for its development, and, on the other hand, on the degree and manner in which the other qualities are suppressed (p. 105).

Stratman seems to have uncritically accepted every statement ever made by anyone calling himself or herself a Marxist as automatically up to Marx's own standards; as though "Marxism" was the corpus of all such statements, to which anyone could add another piece and the totality of which was the system of beliefs whose only requirement for coherence was that it stay philosophically consistent—Marxism being whatever "Marxists" said it was.

The economic dimension

His adverse judgement of Marx’s ideas thereby leads him to a horror of anything economic in the discussion over what constitutes a revolution through which human beings really do liberate themselves from the deadening insanity of the class struggle. It also deprives him of any ability to assess soberly the actual possibilities of ending capitalism.

Marx’s emphasis on the economic dimension of social interaction, it is true, does follow capitalism’s emphasis on the same; for capitalism, however, this emphasis is an end in itself, since it takes the exploitation of the work people do and carries it to technical perfection. The economic is dominant, for Marx, solely because it provides the means of realizing socially defined ends; it represents a practical kind of social activity whose function is to implement generally defined needs. Historical materialism (which is nothing more than Marx’s methodology for analyzing capitalist and other class-divided social orders), on the other hand, appeals to the whole broad range of human experience in order to place capitalism within an analytic matrix; the economic dimension of the analysis is strictly relative to the social dimension and represents merely the definitive starting point in a continuous cycle of human social experience.

Marx gives a succinct explanation of the materialist conception of history in a letter to a Russian man of letters, P.V. Amenkov (dated December 28, 1846). "What is society," he asks, "whatever its form may be? The product of men's reciprocal activity. Are men free to choose this or that form of society for themselves? By no means ... men are not free to choose their productive forces — which are the basis of all their history — for every productive force is an acquired force, the product of former activity."

Values (of solidarity and equality) are a subjective way of describing relations in human society. By themselves they have no content — they require some kind of objective correlation.

13/spring 1999
Marx's change of focus in his economic writings, culminating in the three volumes of Capital, involves no abandonment of his earlier humanism; on the contrary, his economic analysis reinforces his social (and socialist) assumptions by pushing them deliberately into the background.

Engels, writing in 1890 to J. Bloch, puts it in a more down-to-earth fashion:

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure — political, legal, philosophical theories... — also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which... the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary.

Just to drive his point home, he follows up with a couple of historical illustra-

tions: "Without making oneself ridiculous it would be difficult to succeed in explaining in terms of economics the existence of every small state in Germany, past and present, or the origin of the High German consonant mutations..."

The economic sphere only provides the basic outlines for all other kinds of experience—but it is there that we must start if we are adequately to reconstruct the historical dynamic of social change. An appropriately Marxian focus sees the capitalist obsession with the economic dimension as a primary deficiency that people must understand they need to cancel if they are really to emancipate themselves from the rule of capital. From a Marxian vantage point, Stratman's (frankly very commendable) use of a non-Marxian phraseology confirms his prejudice and reinforces his conviction that he has formulated a new, an alternative, conception of social change. Therefore he thinks he has understood, critiqued and superseded Marx, arriving at a different destination in the process, where in reality he has merely added an elaborately unnecessary detour to a path leading to very nearly the same destination.

— Ron Elbert

Historical Materialism
(continued from page 10)

To recapitulate: Marx never shared the capitalists' assumptions about people or their role in the making of history, or about human motivation. His grasp of economic theory was that of an interested layman with a philosophically committed social bias — making his use of it methodologically secondary rather than primary as Stratman implies. He considered the notions and perceptions capitalists hold about human society (and human nature) to be illusions. Stratman never advances any arguments to explain how Marx, to have agreed with these notions "objectively," must have therefore not realized that he really didn't mean they were illusions. Marx repeatedly acknowledges (as above) the role and power of illusion in clouding human thinking; Stratman dismisses it.

— Ron Elbert
NEW DEMOCRACY 
statement of principles

We live under a dictatorship of the wealthy. Most people want a better world. We can only achieve a new world by openly declaring our goals:

1. We are for revolution to create a real democracy. We call on people everywhere to end elite rule and to create real democracy based on principles of solidarity and equality. Democracy means ordinary people sharing all of society with their shared values. It means people together deciding their own goals and how they will cooperate to achieve them. This includes transforming the goals, organization, and control of work to create an economy where the productive wealth of society is used to meet the human needs of all.

2. Revolution to achieve real democracy is necessary and possible. Revolution is necessary because the problems we face are rooted in a system of elite rule that controls people by attacking relations of solidarity and equality. These problems cannot be solved without creating a new society. Revolution is possible because the struggle of ordinary people to humanize the world is the force that drives history, and because most people want the new world that only revolution can bring.

3. Our confidence in the possibility of revolution comes from our confidence in ordinary people. Capitalism, communism, and socialism have all led to societies in which an elite holds the power. None of these systems is democratic. Capitalism and socialism are alternatives to capitalism because they accepted capitalism’s view that economic development is the basis of human development, that self-interest is the primary human motivation, and that ordinary people are a passive mass or a dangerous problem. The basis of a new society is a new, positive view of people.

4. The everyday struggle of ordinary people humanizes the world: the wealth of society and whatever positive human relationships exist within it. Most people in their everyday lives struggle against a culture based on competition and exploitation. They strive in their families and workplaces to create relationships based on equality and commitment to each other. People’s everyday lives have revolutionary meaning.

5. Class struggle is a struggle over what values should shape society, what goods it should pursue, and what should control it. It is a struggle over what it means to be a human being. The values of the capitalist class are inequality, competition, and control from above. The values of the working class are equality, solidarity, and democracy. The goal of working class struggle is to transform the whole world with its values. The most personal acts of kindness and the most public acts of class war are part of the same struggle to humanize the world.

6. The revolutionary movement must not be based on politicians or union officials or business structures or the courts but on ordinary people themselves as the driving force and leaders of change.

7. Revolutions are built on hope. The revolutionary movement will unite ordinary men and women of every race and nationality in a movement in which our confidence in our ability to change the world comes from our confidence in each other.

8. We invite all who agree with these principles to join New Democracy.

Who said it — Marx or Stratman? (a quiz)

Did Marx see the working class as passive and helpless victims, as author David Stratman contends? Of the 12 statements below, pick the ones you feel sure Karl Marx must have agreed with. See how your choices compare with the correct answers given upside down on the bottom.

1. The all-round development of the individual will only cease to be conceived as ideal, as vocation, etc., when the impact of the world which stimulates the real development of the abilities of the individual comes under the control of the individuals themselves...

2. The human individual cannot understand himself or be understood except as part of something larger. His idea about himself and other people is rooted in society. They come from his interaction with other human beings and his understanding of his own relationship with them... The human individual, in other words, is a collective being. Each person is a living and developing product of people working together. What distinguishes a human being from other animals is that he is capable of understanding the human and collective source of his development as a person, and by understanding it, to shape its direction.

3. It is not only the material of my activity — such as the language itself which the thinker uses — which is given to me as a social product. My own existence is a social activity.

4. Revolutionary consciousness consists of workers’ consciousness of themselves as the collective source of value in society and the source of revolution.

5. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence and the existence of men is their actual life-process.

6. Precisely because it is based on ordinary people as the makers of history, a revolutionary democratic movement must openly challenge large capitalist goals, values, plans, policies and power with its own revolutionary vision.

7. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.

8. The need for revolution comes from the dehumanizing nature of capitalism in the daily life of all who live within this system... The possibility of revolution comes from the values and ideas about human life which most people share, and the nature of the struggle against capitalism in which they are already engaged.

9. These values and ideas — cooperation, solidarity, equality — have their roots in human nature and are continuously recreated by people as they engage in productive activity.

10. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.

11. ...the social history of men is never anything but the history of their individual development, whether they are conscious of it or not.

12. Human beings, however, do not exist as "communities" or "collectives" or "classes" or "nations," but as individuals. These collective terms merely define relationships among aggregations of individuals. While people’s social nature has profound effects on their thoughts and actions, it does not determine their activities or affect their being as individuals.

Socialism will be a worldwide system without money or political frontiers, based on production for use and designed to satisfy the needs of the entire world population, not just of those people who can work a system to their advantage. In it, many interdependent communities of production will coordinate their output and consumption so as to tap the abundance of technology and render the market-induced scarcities of capitalism a chapter of our prehistoric past. Founded as it must be on common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production, it can only exist on a world scale. In a social sense, it will be the first worldwide community of production in the history of mankind.

But what is the difference between a "worldwide system of production" and a "community of production"? If the conditions for common ownership (communism) only exist on a world scale, then how will individual communities of owners maintain their control over the production process and over the distribution of social wealth?

**Common ownership is global**

The short answer is that ownership of the means of production and distribution will only be intelligible at the world level, while the democratic control over each unit of production will be the affair of each community of producers and consumers. It is not that legal title to specific means of production will somehow get transferred to the entire earth's population. Ownerships of these by individuals will simply come to an end. (The separation of the producer from the means of production so characteristic of capitalism, paradoxically, became possible only with ownership of specific means of production by private individuals.) Entire communities cannot on the other hand legally entitle themselves, since legal systems are merely part of the logic of enforcement by private owners of their interests. Since private interests can only be defined through a denial of common access, communities cannot own means of production in any exclusive, private sense.

Because we can safely assume that each worker can produce far in excess of his or her own personal needs, the physical size of the community of production units will naturally be smaller and more concentrated than the whole group of consumers who use those products. However, even when the latter are located far, far away, they still have some direct membership in the community of production in the strict sense, in the same way that trade and commerce have abolished the constraints of geography. It is a community of need, possessed of the material capability for satisfying that need.

But the problem is not really so complicated. What a community looks like, its historical and phenomenological profile, so to speak, is determined by the overall system of production. There are really only community types, spread out and distributed according to conditions of production and use. Historically, each particular community, whether as a grouping of dwellings and workplaces or as a population of producers and consumers, was shaped by the régime of production on which it rests; and each régime of production was geographically determined by the extent to which producing and exchanging goods and services had developed. Following Morgan and Engels, let us take a brief look at Europe, where the general evolution of commodity production was most complete the earliest.

**Barbarian society**

Before private property ever introduced civilization, the typical community of production of barbarian society was the village, into which related members of the same gens (or clans) distributed themselves. Commodity exchange tended to be little more than an exchange of surplus goods between technologically primitive communities of producers. Barbarian society was the last phase of human history in which the primitive common ownership of this surplus still left any trace. With the actual production of commodities (e.g., food, clothing, building materials and livestock) still very restricted, private property was at first scarcely more than a cruel framework of cold iron clamped over the soft body of subsistence agriculture. It was the institutionalization of poverty.

Marking the divide between barbarian primitivism and advanced private property was the institution of chattel slavery, which was the invasion of agriculture, handicrafts and domestic labor by commodity production on a large scale. Towns and cities appeared and grew, and so did social distinctions based on privatized wealth.

The community of production characteristic of chattel slavery tended, consequently, to be the slave emporium. In Roman Italy, conquered foreign peasants and hapless debtors (sometimes the proletarianized former peasant soldiers themselves) were sold into long-term or even lifelong misery drudging way on huge tracts of land, whose new owners had evicted the previous peasant possessors or acquired their holdings. All the great
European cities of antiquity were essentially no more than pestilence-ridden slave-marts. Feudal servitude, in contrast, the model for which grew out of the slave-colonies on the great estates, and so spread to northern Europe, produced not only the community of the manor, but also a new kind of community: the free, or chartered, town having a relatively unattached population.

With the disintegration of the imperial markets, commodity production’s invasion of agriculture may have been set back severely, in terms of quantities sold in the marketplace; but feudal production was enhanced by comparison, because the number of captive producers was vastly greater, and the seizure of their surplus labor — the legal robbery of a major portion of the goods and services the serfs produced — was much more efficient than the slave-owner’s crude seizure of the producer’s entire person. (Chattel slavery had of course by no means disappeared.) But the fortified guild-marts of the free towns still clung to a precarious existence on the edge of the system of agricultural commodity production, which in turn still took up only a part of society’s total survival effort.

The community-form typical of capitalist production is still more advanced and outgrowth of the feudal town. Its dominant feature, however, is its ability to expand and concentrate in tune with developments in the system as a whole. Moreover, it does not exist at the margin of that system, but forms its center — since capitalism tends toward concentration of ownership and control, and requires a high labor-mobility, a workforce that can reach the workplace in time to produce an adequate profit.

The open mass-city

The typical expression of the capitalist community is therefore the open mass-city which, in the most highly developed countries, as the descendant of the ancient slave-emporium and the feudal guild-mart, has absorbed the entire population formerly engaged in subsistence agriculture, except for a decreasing proportion of wage-earners on the farms.

Under capitalism, then, the form of community typical of its mode of production reaches an absolute maximum of social development. The universal market system guts or subordinates all local communities. The capitalist city is no longer a true community of production, in its most developed condition, but a huge employment agency servicing a number of production units (factories, mines, mills), together with a group of supporting services whose purpose is to avoid excessive waste in the distribution of the surplus value produced.

It furnishes the negative image of the original social community: it exists solely in the technical sense, as an economic community, a creature of the marketplace. The concentrating of the vast majority of the world’s people in such gargantuan employment colonies makes the community technologically malleable — capable of undergoing almost any rearrangement, within the limits set by the market.

In preparing the world for the advent of the community of need, capitalism thereby causes the world’s division into communities to evolve to its next stage — that of production for use on a world scale, whose realization lies beyond the capabilities of private property and capital accumulation.

A world community

Thus it is no longer of such overriding importance where people live as it was in the times of our remote ancestors, whose communities were concretely defined, culturally cohesive, technologically isolated geographical units. What counts primarily is people’s identified social needs and the corresponding pool of human working abilities, plus the whole mass of labor performed to service those needs.

The concept of location is not part of the community of need; the community of production runs itself on the basis of information provided by a worldwide system of communications, and it is the job of those individuals who put in some time at local workplaces to deliberate on the range of issues affecting them. (That will be about the only sense in which work routines and production planning still constitute “jobs.”) This includes daily discussions with consumers as well, and with other producers elsewhere. Both groups (producers and consumers) taken together form a natural community which functions as a discrete whole, on a democratic basis, in a world-system of similar communities.

The ownership side only comes into play when this collection of diverse communities discusses the coordination of production and product distribution. The owners tell the production workers what they will need, if it can be produced, and take what they have said they needed before. But when the times comes to exercise their social interest as owners, they must get together with all the other owners and discuss how to avoid major collisions and bottlenecks and to promote the satisfactory operation of the system. They carry out this political function utilizing the same system of communications as the production workers, who are really only themselves in work clothes.

With administrative institutions no longer able to coercive people, their deliberations lack the force of law. They have rather the character of news reporting — a present-day institution that will find itself rapidly transformed into a process of ongoing public debate over which policies the community should adopt.

And so the notion of a community of production tends toward the technical, economic side of world socialism, while the concept of a worldwide system of production tends toward the social and political sides. Discussing socialism from the standpoint of its worldwide character, we put the emphasis on social relations, while discussing the communist organization of production, we stress the local, daily, analytic aspects of the actual system itself.

Democratic control exists on both levels, but oriented differently in each case: worldwide, it tends to be more political, and locally, more economic. In both cases, there is no trace of money to be found, except in museums. No one works for wages. People do not have “jobs” as in the old days. Capital is no longer used to produce wealth. There are no frontiers anymore, other than the eternally fugitive ones of language and culture. And an indefinite expansion of the means of communication will consign even the “language barrier” to an exhibit room perhaps adjoining that of hard currency and credit.

—ROEL
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Socialism—a classless, wageless, moneyless society with free access to all goods and services—is necessary and possible. The only obstacle to it in our time is the lack of a class-conscious political majority. Are YOU a socialist? You might recognize some of your own ideas in the following statements.

**Capitalism, even with reforms, cannot function in the interests of the working class.** Capitalism, by its very nature, requires continual "reforms"; yet reforms cannot alter the basic relationship of wage-labor and capital and would not be considered, to begin with, if their legislation would lead to disturbing this relationship. Reforms, in other words, are designed to make capitalism more palatable to the working class by holding out the false hope of an improvement in their condition. To whatever extent they afford improvement, reforms benefit the capitalist class, not the working class.

**To establish socialism the working class must first gain control of the powers of government through their political organization.** It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. State power gives control of the main avenues of education and propaganda—either directly or indirectly—and of the armed forces that frequently and efficiently crush ill-conceived working class attempts at violent opposition. The one way it is possible in a highly developed capitalism to oust the capitalist class from its ownership and control over the means of production and distribution is to first strip it of its control over the state.

Once this is accomplished the state will be converted from a government over people to an administration of community affairs (both locally and on a world scale). The World Socialist Party of the United States advocates the ballot, and no other method, as a means of abolishing capitalism.

**Members of the World Socialist Party do not support—either directly or indirectly—members of any other political party.** It is always possible, even if difficult in some instances, to vote for world socialism by writing in the name of the Party and a member for a particular legislative office. Our main task, however, is to make socialists and not to advocate use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

**The World Socialist Party rejects the theory of leadership.** Neither individual "great" personalities nor "revolutionary vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class "must be the work of the working class itself." Educators to explain socialism, yes; Administrators to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes; But leaders or "vanguards," never!

**There is an irreconcilable conflict between scientific socialism and religion.** Socialists reject religion for two main reasons:

- Religion divides the universe into spiritual and physical realms, and all religions offer their adherents relief from their earthly problems through some form of appeal to the spiritual. Socialists see the cause of the problems that wrack human society as material and political. We see the solution as one involving material and political, not spiritual, means.

- Religions ally themselves with the institutions of class society. Particular religious organizations and leaders may, and frequently do, rebel against what they deem injustice, even suffering imprisonment and worse for their efforts. But they seek their solutions within the framework of the system socialists aim to abolish. One cannot understand the development of social evolution by resorting to religious ideas.

**The system of society formerly in effect in Russia, and still in effect in China and other so-called socialist or communist countries, is state capitalism.** Goods and services, in those countries, as in avowedly capitalist lands, were always produced for sale on a market with a view to profit and not, primarily, for use. The placing of industry under the control of the state in no way alters the basic relationships of wage labor and capital. The working class remains a class of wage slaves. The class that controls the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value eating class.

**Trade unionism is the means by which wage workers organize to "bargain collectively" so that they might sell their labor power at the best possible price and try to improve working conditions. The unorganized have no economic weapon with which to resist the attempts of capital to bear down their standards. But unions must work within the framework of capitalism. They are useful, then, to butt a limited extent. They can do nothing toward lessening unemployment, for example.

In fact, they encourage employers to introduce more efficient methods in order to overcome added costs of higher wages and thereby hasten and increase unemployment. More and more the tendency of industry is toward a greater mass of production with fewer employees. Unions must, by their very nature, encourage such development although they are also known, occasionally, to resist this natural trend through what employers like to call "feather-bedding." As Marx put it: instead of the conservative motto, "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work," the workers ought to inscribe upon their banner "abolition of the wages system."

**Membership in the World Socialist Party of the United States requires an understanding of and agreement with what we consider to be the basics of scientific socialism.** We have always been convinced that a worldwide system based upon production for use, rather than for sale on a market, requires that a majority of the population be socialist in attitude. Events since the establishment of the World Socialist Movement have, we maintain, proven the validity of this judgment. If you are in general agreement with these statements, we invite you to join our organization.

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The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:

- Society as it is at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
- This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

The Companion Parties of Socialism, therefore, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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treat opposing “interests” as a threat and to divide themselves accordingly into antithetical classes. The quality of universality that needs to apply to social science for it to function is fundamentally hobbled, thereby severely inhibiting the rigor with which those few specialists who exercise the occupation can reason. Ideas representing mutually conflicting interests add another level of complexity to the picture by stating those interests as competing universals.

Social scientists, furthermore, cannot conduct laboratory experiments: they are always necessarily part of the experiment themselves. How, therefore, can we evaluate social experience scientifically, if we simply work with the restrictions and conditions of natural science? Obviously, only an equivalent kind of methodology will work. Since, however, ordinary kinds of social interaction require the use of judgment at every level by non-specialized generalists, we would need to transform the earth’s entire population into a gigantic peer group to satisfy the conditions set forth by Kuhn.

**Scientists as generalists**

How could such a “peer group” function? When the “scientific community” is society, the specialist cannot “apply” theories at the level of society as a whole. Instead, a world community of generalists has to concern itself with problems of social science, and only to the extent that these are societal problems. To the extent these same generalists interest themselves in social questions that are not problem-solving in character, they step out of their roles as scientists.

Following Kuhn, we can translate the distinction between socialism as a point of view, a movement and a system of production into a distinction between what he calls a “circular argument designed to persuade; an as yet very small “community” of enlightened, emancipated workers; and a scientifically designed set of institutions that actually produce the results promised by the first two.

This does not, however, confer on economics as we know it, or on political economy in its previous incarnation, the status of a science in its own right. Emancipated workers converting themselves into an emancipated society carrying on an emancipated production (where wealth is produced for the use of human beings rather than for the profit of capitalists) will not require so extensive a body of theoretical concepts as today’s economists, whose job in no small part involves justifying the diversion of the value of the wealth produced to enlarging the rate of profit (and specifically, justifying the wage rates set up to ensure this outcome). Marketing concepts and concepts relating to exchange of goods and services are superfluous from the standpoint of the “use” paradigm.

As both a mode of production and a set of theoretical propositions to be implemented practically, capitalism represents bad social science. The task of social scientists (every living person) is to set it aside for a mode of organizing society (producing and distributing wealth) that puts the administration of society on a scientific (democratic) basis. With modern communications technology, people can at last run the world democratically.

**A failure to communicate**

Early attempts at democratic revolutions foanded for lack of ability to spread quickly the world, given the paralyzing inadequacy of communications on a worldwide scale; Marx and Engels called them “utopian” for this and related reasons. Capitalism as a system is “fully developed” at each stage of its evolution, but one can easily understand how, reviewing the Anabaptist and Digger movements from the vantage point of 19th-century industrialism, Marx and Engels might very well have concluded these early, aborted revolutions never stood a chance. Overwhelming difficulties of communication still hobbled human consciousness as late as the last century. Marx and Engels did not manufacture any “laws” asserting the impossibility of revolution before the advent of industrial capitalism, as Stratman claims. (In fact, he ignores altogether the importance of communication as a problem.)

Given that economic relations are sub-social in character, economic measurements cannot be independently quantitative, but only relative to the social interrelationships they refer to. The only valid quantitative approach to measuring economic relations can be relative to the social requirements that give rise to them. This was in fact Marx’s special
contribution to social theory, the ability to track quantitative potential at the social level to its economic realization at the sub-social level. Hence his "laws of motion" of capitalist production must be considered qualitative—not quantitative—in character.

Considerations of quantity in social science generally have to give way to those of quality. A revolution in the qualitative assessment of social data could therefore not be restricted to a group of professional researchers, since holistic criteria require unrestricted input from society as a whole. So Kuhn's "scientific revolution," translated for social science, does indeed become Stratman's "democratic revolution."

Is economy a science?

Although political economy was characterized by the "constant reiteration of fundamentals," in the 19th century, the material did not permit the design of "special equipment for the task" (Kuhn, p. 18), which means that the current discipline of economics represents only a "revolution" by mimicry; the semblance of paradigm transition is bogus, since the "inexactness" of economic research is only arguably based on laboratory-like methods. Beyond this, however, the interdependence of all social knowledge makes it impossible for anyone one discipline to detach itself from the field as a whole. The ambition of economics to do just that—in contrast to Marx's socially grounded methodology, which relativized the insights of political economy to the study of society as a whole—makes the whole connection between "economics" and economic (social) science a spurious one. Modern economics remains but a glorified version of early political economy on the question of science—and its traditional tight dependency on the interests of investors of capital renders each advance more suspect.

Though neither Marx nor anyone else might qualify (yet) as the creator of a paradigm in Kuhn's sense, he seems to have come closer than most other social thinkers, going by the extent to which the insights of historical materialism can be found, lurking unannounced in many cases, in the underlying assumptions of a wide variety of social writers and theorists. Kuhn himself, in defining scientific revolutions—the way in which scientific knowledge is acquired—as a function of occupation, of the history of professional activity, is demonstrating an implicit acceptance of historical materialism, in this context, that goes well beyond simple acknowledgment. He is basing his whole account of scientific development on it and in the process adopting what any Marxist would recognize as a materialistic slant.

Kuhn's concept of "paradigm" relies heavily on the notion of community—community achieved on the basis of a commonly understood and accepted methodology. Society has yet to reach this point; reaching it will mean the fusion of political and scientific revolution on a global scale.

If social science has consequently not yielded its "first paradigm" so far, that is because the real scientists—those people in society at large who man the "laboratories" of work and production are not able to direct the course of "normal scientific" development. Production—and work in general—is still a "problem" because it remains in the hands of a pre-scientific élite, the capitalist class. Everyday work (in an industrial context) as "normal science" will require the reorganization of wealth production and distribution ("distribution" being a general term that accounts for the bulk of non-productive work) by the producers and distributors. This would constitute a scientific (democratic) or socialist revolution, in that the limited "normal science" of production would achieve paradigm status by virtue of a change of consciousness on the part of the producers (Stratman's "values"). This putting of labor on a social-scientific basis would also, through the ending of the pre-scientific élite's control over wealth production, put away the "problem of scarcity" inflicted on the pre-paradigm majority.

People cannot treat each other as objects for manipulating—which raises the knotty methodological problem of how scientific theory can emerge from the mutual interaction of subjects. What can constitute a social equivalent for laboratory experimentation on objects? Whatever form the answer takes, the restriction of research to a relatively small number of professional specialists does not function satisfactorily as a framework for studying the complexity of human social relations, even though this kind of arrangement has proven efficacious for the study of (non-human) nature. Since the purpose of experiments in "normal science" is to carry out highly structured, specific and practical activities—"applying" an accepted paradigm, the "laboratories" of social investigation have to be reconstructed as abstractions: each discipline is a type of laboratory abstracting its specific kind of social information from the undifferentiated welter of empirical data.

Because professionalism in a pre-paradigm period like ours cannot carry the full weight of scientific knowledge (owing to the restriction on the numbers of social science practitioners), the ability to know "with precision" what an as-yet unestablished paradigm should lead us to expect cannot get beyond the level of intuitive reasoning. And since "anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm" (Kuhn, p. 65), social scientists are limited, in the present period, to projecting different logical conceptualizations of "normal science" and "anomaly." What makes social science different from natural science is the much greater importance of many-sided communication for all aspects of social science.

The social-science paradigm

To get the paradigm, however, is a little more difficult, because it must transcend the specialties: the nature of a paradigm, for social science, involves a more complex interrelating of investigative methods than does a paradigm in natural science. For this reason, the maximum input from
society at large is necessary, so that the paradigm that emerges will be sufficiently general to achieve a consensus.

Kuhn's notion of a paradigm requires, in addition, a whole establishment with an official economic standing — implying a degree of social acceptance Marxism simply never enjoyed. While the Soviet Union may have seemed an exception, it did not become the case throughout most of capitalism; but most importantly, even in the "socialist fatherland," from as far back as the Kronstadt Revolt, the workers ceased to take seriously the regime's "Marxism," (to say nothing of its claims to be "socialist"). The real social scientists of Russia — its worker and peasant populations — were denied input into the alleged paradigm and also the opportunity to practice. Its politically controversial character beyond the frontiers of the Leninist states subjected it to a degree of marginality not inflicted on the practitioners of "normal science."

**Marxism and the "first paradigm"**

This exclusion on the part of official society, guided by the ruling capitalist class, could not have corresponded for its part to one "vision" or (not the same thing) "paradigm" or "model" competing with another. As we can gather from the mere persistence of a profit-eating state-capitalist class, the materialist conception of history never replaced political economy as the preferred methodology of the "Communist" Party (and certainly not of the traditional capitalists — though, as I have already stated, this is not the level on which to look for paradigm change.) Nor did Marx's methodology replace capitalism, a system of production for profit — whose rival is not Marxism but a system of production for use. Finally, as Kuhn suggests, the mark of a paradigm is its economically stable recognition, the concomitant of a science's "maturity."

We have not reached the point where historical materialism is more than a strong competitor among a number of "alternate constructions." The ability of the capitalist class to marginalize Marxism politically and thus deny it the necessary economic stability indicates symptomatically Marxism's failure to meet the minimum terms of a Kuhnian paradigm. It may be the best effort made to date, but the Marxian analysis of society has yet to establish a "first paradigm" — upon which social scientists are in general agreement — for social science as a whole. Assuming that it does, a scientific-political revolution will have to occur with it, installing ordinary working people as the scientific "peer group" making the decisions (democratically) about how to run society, conferring on themselves, through the criterion of production for use, the economic stability necessary for this.

Kuhn's scientific revolutions represent a series of moments when scientists rethink systems of general relations applied to traditionally accepted data sets ("fundamentals"). A scientific revolution creates the "first paradigm," and once that happens, all subsequent evolution in a field occurs as a series of paradigm changes. These shifts affect all thinking in the field, because the first paradigm turns that field into a community, a whole.

Before the revolution, thinking and problem-solving were in the hands of individuals and were pre-scientific in the sense that the outcome of their investigations was not what today we take to be science. It is only after that first establishment (which Kuhn later qualifies as more of a piecemeal process) that all subsequent change takes the form of shifting from one paradigm to another. Kuhn's concept of "paradigm" relies heavily on the notion of community — community achieved on the basis of a commonly understood and accepted methodology. Society has yet to reach this point; reaching it will mean the fusion of political and scientific revolution on a global scale.

**Change of consciousness**

Paradigm change is thus more than simply intuitive reorganization of interpretation. The "paradigm change" Kuhn describes translates into the "change of consciousness" posited by socialists as a prerequisite for eliminating capital and abolishing wages. This change is by itself the key factor in making the revolution. Of course, changes of consciousness do not materialize out of thin air, and Kuhn's "crisis" and "anomalies" find their equiva-

**The paradigm is the revolution**

Stratman makes a serious mistake in discounting the importance of the economic factor, believing as he does that Marx placed a crippling emphasis on material conditions. This blinds Stratman to the fact that the "paradigm change" is itself the revolution, not a factor separate from it. A "new paradigm" is precisely the outcome — the end rather than the means. What he comes up with short of that will not have the character of a paradigm; nor is his critique of Marx at paradigm level as he imagines. The role of consciousness is intimately bound up with the use people make of their economic relations with each other. And since this is generically true of human society, any "vision of a new society" that aspires to be people-driven cannot safely ignore this practical and theoretical limit. Failure to take it into account will only provide the basis for new elitist adventures, no new basis of human society, a "different world" to work in (Kuhn, p. 111).

A system of wealth production is itself, from the perspective of social science, a paradigm — not merely the body of propositions that articulate it. World socialism does not have an analysis of capitalism conceptually separated from the production of wealth, as Stratman does. This first paradigm can only be implemented at the point of revolution, which is the point at which people "convert" to the idea that they are the social scientists; Stratman goes along with conventional reasoning in seeing paradigmatic possibilities (the occurrences of revolution) in a pre-revolutionary context — and also in limiting the practitioners of social science to professional specialists. This is what allows him to fashion Marx into a "scientist of revolution" and Lenin into a Marxist.

—Ron Elbert
Social science, democracy and "seeing with new eyes"

So you wanna be a paradigm!

Given author David Stratman's frequently repeated assertion that he has devised a new paradigm that boldly goes where no Marxo-capitalist has gone before, some questioning of sources is in order. While Stratman has attempted an ambitious, even a brilliant, stroke, closer examination of one of his major sources, Thomas S. Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* raises serious questions. True, Marxists are given their last cigarette and a chance to expound their obsolete views before Stratman's new paradigm dispatches them to the grave of history, but it is all for nothing: the bullets are blanks. Neither Marx nor capital ever established a paradigm to begin with. What follows is an independent attempt, based on Kuhn's book, to explain why.

As Kuhn sees it, paradigm changes are the stuff of scientific revolutions, which result from the mutual collisions between incompatible models of scientific investigation. A first paradigm establishes a field's definitive model, narrowing that field's legitimate boundaries of problem-solving through the defeat of various contending pro-professional schools of thought, each one attempting to resolve a crisis of theory in the discipline. The paradigm thus legitimized within the newly formed professional community serves as a methodological foundation for focusing on the most promising questions to ask.

The newly appointed professionals throw themselves into solving puzzles derived from the newly unified set of questions, a phase of the cycle Kuhn terms "normal science." Eventually, however, normal science, which works so well precisely because it can concentrate on very narrowly defined issues, boxes itself into a new crisis, to which the scientific community again responds by raising insurgencies against the ruling paradigm; one of the rebel conceptions at length succeeds in gaining acceptance or endorsement by the majority of scientists in the field. Its achieving paradigm status marks the occurrence of another scientific revolution.


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This has a convincing sound when applied to the natural sciences. How much, however, does Kuhn's notion of "normal science" apply to social science? The clear lines grow fuzzy. The term "revolution" implies an exercise of political judgment, so that overturning a paradigm involves the judgment of scientists. Kuhn links this overturning inextricably to professional activity. Trained specialists in the natural sciences float novel and "unprecedented" assumptions past each other, trying to cope with the crisis of an accepted model, and ultimately a better, but incompatible, model emerges out of the period of confrontations.

That social science and democracy should be indispensable complements to each other describes something all forms of class-divided society implicitly reject—the attribution of decision-making and evaluative capabilities to each individual making up the social community. Under existing conditions, in other words, the practice of social science finds itself too narrowly restricted to allow for very much of the parity that would be required to apply the concept of "scientific revolution" to it. In light of this, intuitive approximation exercised by narrow strata of professionals specialized by occupation is the best social science can offer.

Further reductions of applicability emerge when to the exclusion of the majority from decision-making we add the repercussions of parsing human intelligence by class or economic interests. Not only do a relative handful arrogate the right to decide to themselves, but the effects of exclusion are existential in their impact: people who are privileged only to make small decisions rearrange the exercise of their native human intelligence to conform energetically with the reduced scope allowed them. The "false consciousness" that goes with economic "interests" causes socially conditioned individuals to

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